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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CONAKRY 000065

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SUBJECT: YOUTH LEADER WITHDRAWS SUPPORT FOR DADIS AND THE CNDD

REF: CONAKRY 0050

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. SUMMARY. An important youth leader, Dansa Kourouma, claims to have backed Moussa Dadis Camara even before President Conte's death, and to have helped Dadis and others plot the coup that overthrew the government. However, Dansa told Poloff on January 22 that he is disappointed with the CNDD's leadership and no longer supports the military regime.

After having met with Dadis several times since the coup, Dansa said that he does not believe that CNDD members have any intention of ceding power to a civilian government. He commented on Dadis' lack of leadership and his willingness to quickly accommodate the interests of those around him.

Although he has always claimed to be apolitical, Dansa is now interested in running for public office and is looking to expand his political network of support. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) On January 22, Poloff met with Dansa Kourouma who heads up a local NGO implementing a USAID sub grant (through IFES) supporting the electoral process. Although he was trained as a medical doctor, Dansa's focus in recent years has been on civic activism. He is considered to be among Conakry's most active youth leaders. Thiero Balde, a rival youth leader close to the CNDD, and Dansa have frequently disagreed over how to mobilize the country's youth to force political change. They ultimately split ways in October when Thiero started meeting with military elements plotting a coup d'etat, although they continue to exchange ideas. Both youth leaders are in their late twenties to early thirties.

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WANING SUPPORT FOR DADIS  
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¶3. (S) Dansa told Poloff that he is completely disillusioned with the military regime led by Moussa Dadis Camara, as embodied in the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD). Dansa claimed that he had initially supported Dadis and had actually been working with him before President Conte's death on a plot to overthrow the government and implement a military transition to civilian rule. "I was in favor of pushing the coup before Conte died, but people were divided," Dansa said. According to Dansa, Conte's death erased any divisions and enabled Dadis to move promptly to seize power. "I was the first of the youth leaders to publicly support Dadis," he said, adding "we were out in the streets and in front of RTG (Radio Television Guinean) demonstrating our support early on December 23." Dansa added that he helped the coup plotters write the CNDD's first communiqué that was broadcast at 7:30 AM the day of the coup.

¶4. (S) However, Dansa said that he has reversed his position and no longer supports Dadis and the CNDD. "I do not have the impression that they will give up power," he said. Dansa told Poloff that he had privately counseled Dadis to seize

power, preside over a two-year transition period, and then gracefully fade into the background for a short time before presenting himself as a candidate for public office. Dansa said that Dadis now appears to have abandoned this strategy. "The fact that they keep focusing on the economy while ignoring elections shows that they are completely at odds with the socio-political reality," Dansa said. He added that a significant number of CNDD members are focused on consolidating personal gains and have no interest in ceding power anytime soon. "Some of them want prestige and name recognition, others want cars and money," he said.

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DADIS LACKS CONTROL  
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15. (S) Dansa emphasized that he was basing his impressions on a series of four "one-on-one" meetings he had had with Dadis since the coup. Although the meetings were private, members of Dadis' retinue, including mutiny leader and now Minister of Presidential Security Claude Pivi, were present. Dansa described how various advisors would suggest something to Dadis who would then immediately order that the suggestion be executed. According to Dansa, Pivi exerts an extraordinary amount of influence over Dadis. "Pivi says whatever he thinks and Dadis listens closely," he said. After personally viewing the decision making process, Dansa said that it became clear that Dadis is ill equipped for the job, that he relies heavily on the advice of those around him, and that he does not question or analyze that advice.

16. (S) In response to a question on the structure of power,  
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Dansa said that Dadis does not control the CNDD. "The CNDD controls itself," he said, adding "it is not a team, but rather, a group of competing interests." He pointed to the often contradictory decisions issued by the CNDD over the past month as evidence of Dadis' lack of control.

17. (S) Dansa told Poloff he was particularly disappointed over the cabinet nominations (reftel). According to Dansa, the cabinet picks reflect nepotism and a lack of objectivity. "Most of them are there because they are Dadis' friends," he said. Later in the meeting, Dansa said that Dadis is heavily influenced by contacts from the Forest Region who reportedly directed him to nominate specific individuals for certain positions.

18. (S) Referring to the CNDD's ongoing arrests of former government officials, Dansa said that the military regime is effectively "persecuting" people. "They can shoot and kill and do whatever they want...there is total impunity," he said. He later added "This government is not going in the right direction."

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CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLITICAL LEADERS  
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19. (SBU) When Poloff commented on the lack of cohesion among civil society leaders, Dansa agreed, and then argued that international assistance will be critical if Guinean civil society is to pull itself together. "We have to be solid and independent, but do not forget that the other side has unlimited resources," he said. "We need you to think about how you can really help civil society fight this battle...we are going to need support," he added. Dansa criticized the USG's decision to suspend foreign assistance, commenting that such sanctions hurt the civilian sector, not the military. "They (the military) do not need your money," he said.

110. (SBU) Continuing on the same theme, Dansa said that the lack of cohesion among civil society leaders is only one aspect of the problem. "What we need to support is the emergence of a new generation of political leaders," he said,

adding "we need to develop a strategy to help cultivate a new political class, and this needs to happen before elections."

¶11. (SBU) According to Dansa, Guinea's main civil society organizations are weak and ineffective. He described how he had recently contacted the labor unions in order to organize demonstrations in the capital, but that union leaders offered flimsy excuses and refused. "Their position completely contradicted their public rhetoric," he said. Dansa also mentioned the National Council of Civil Society Organizations which has been plagued with leadership issues ever since its president, Ben Sekou Syllah, became the head of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) nearly a year ago. "Syllah has not resigned as president because he is not secure in his current position, but his refusal to resign is dividing civil society," he said.

¶12. (SBU) Before ending the meeting, Dansa told Poloff that he is actively seeking an international educational exchange opportunity, preferably in the United States. He emphasized that he prefers a one-year post graduate program that would enable him to enhance his resume while building critical personal networks with the Guinean Diaspora. Dansa said that the Diaspora plays an important role in the Guinean political scene and that his personal lack of contacts within this group has begun to limit his effectiveness as a political leader. He said that he wants to return to Guinea no later than 2010. "I am not abandoning my country...I am preparing for future leadership," he said. Dansa said that he has been working to build a broader youth movement and is considering putting himself forward as a candidate for public office at some point in the near future.

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COMMENT  
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¶13. (S) Although Dansa told Poloff that he and rival youth leader Thierno Balde had disagreed over the objectives of a jointly planned youth movement in September, Dansa's January 22 comments suggest that he and Thierno may simply have disagreed over which elements of the military to approach about a coup d'etat. They seem to have been working with different factions, both of which ultimately came out on top with some of Thierno's contacts ending up in the CNDD and Dansa's pick, Dadis, ending up as the president.

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¶14. (S) Dansa and Thierno continue to exchange ideas, but they likely see each other as potential political rivals, especially now that they both have expressed an interest in public office. Despite their frequent differences of opinion, Dansa and Thierno actually share a similar strategic vision. Each has accused the other of ethnic or clan based biases, which may help explain why they have been unable to bring their respective groups together. Incidentally, Dansa has always described himself as apolitical in the past and has denied having any political agenda. That has clearly changed. Dansa and Thierno may well represent the new generation of political leadership that Dansa is talking about. END COMMENT.

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